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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [AF](#) [NL](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/AFGHANISTAN: MOD STRATEGY FOR MOVING FORWARD WITH ISAF STAGE III DEPLOYMENT

Classified By: Charge D'Affaires Chat Blakeman;
reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[¶](#)1. (C) Summary: According to Lo Casteleijn (Director, General Policy Affairs, MOD), the Dutch government is expected to make a positive decision by the end of October to deploy 1,000 - 1,2000 troops to Uruzghan province in Afghanistan in support of ISAF Stage III. Casteleijn hoped that parliamentary approval of the decision would follow a few weeks later, but noted that prior fulfillment of certain "pre-conditions" would help obtain broad support in parliament, especially given concerns recently raised by the opposition Labor party. Such pre-conditions include securing U.S. intelligence and logistics support, establishing a PRT partnership with Australia, and cost-sharing to renovate Kandahar airport. The Dutch also are considering an intensive security review of security conditions in and around Kandahar. Casteleijn suggested that a pitch by the USG might help convince Australia to team with the Netherlands in Uruzghan. End summary.

ISAF Stage III

[¶](#)2. (C) In a meeting with Charge on September 15, Casteleijn outlined Dutch participation plans for ISAF Stage III in Uruzghan province. He said the Dutch are well aware of the challenges posed by the decision to deploy in Uruzghan, a mountainous region "teeming with Taliban," and see the deployment as a "true test" of Dutch forces. Casteleijn added that the security situation to the south along the border with Pakistan was worrisome, and the subject of intensive review.

[¶](#)3. (C) Nevertheless, the Dutch government is leaning toward deploying to Uruzghan by May 2006. Casteleijn expected a Dutch government decision in favor of the deployment would be announced by the end of October, followed by parliamentary debate. He suggested parliamentary approval of the deployment could follow after one or two weeks, but added this was not an assured outcome. The recent surge in polls by the opposition Labor Party (PvdA), he noted, might make it more eager to engage in a contentious debate on this issue as it looks to the national elections in 2007. As in every military debate in parliament since the Srebrenica disaster, he noted, a key question in parliament will be whether or not the Dutch government has fully met the post-Srebrenica "conditions" set to ensure that Dutch troops are properly deployed and protected.

U.S. Support

[¶](#)4. (C) Anticipating a vigorous parliamentary debate, Casteleijn said several factors should be considered "pre-conditions" to Dutch deployment to Uruzghan in ISAF Stage III. One of the pre-set list of conditions following Srebrenica involves coordination with a greater power. Casteleijn noted that a guarantee of U.S. support -- through the provision of intelligence or logistics and transport -- would help meet this condition and could be useful in swaying skeptical members of Parliament.

Partnering with Australia

[¶](#)5. (C) A second deployment "pre-condition" is finding an operational partner for the Dutch in the field. Casteleijn confirmed that the Dutch are still actively engaged with Australia on this issue. He explained that Parliament will limit the number of personnel for the PRT deployment to 1000, ramping up to 1200 once the Dutch assume the rotating regional command in Kandahar in November 2006. Casteleijn said that this would not be sufficient to handle the Stage III PRT. Australian provision of an additional 200-300 soldiers, he said, would bring the PRT manpower level up to an acceptable number, and should also satisfy the concerns of Dutch parliamentarians. An Australian partnership made sense for a number of reasons; Australian special forces, for example, are familiar with the region and have experience working closely with the UK, Canada, and the United States.

[¶](#)6. (C) Casteleijn added that the Dutch will seek to continue their discussions with the Australians on the margins of the UNGA, and also have asked NATO SYG de Hoop Scheffer to weigh

in in favor of a Dutch-Australian Uruzghan partnership. Casteleijn suggested a USG pitch to the Australians would be helpful.

Cost-Sharing for Kandahar Airport

17. (C) Casteleijn said that the cost of repairing the runway at Kandahar airport has become a third "almost contentious" issue influencing the Uruzghan deployment. Dutch F-16s out of Kandahar will support all PRTs involved in Stage III. The Dutch believe that the cost of renovating the airport should not fall disproportionately upon themselves and the UK, Casteleijn said. He suggested some form of cost-sharing or use of NATO common funds be employed to renovate the airport.

18. (C) Casteleijn added that the Dutch were also looking into the possibility of transport assistance (C-130s) from the Canadians and Belgians. (Note: The MOD announced September 20 plans to buy two C-130s and five Chinook helicopters from the USG. The first C-130 will be operational at the end of 2006; the second in 2007. End note.)

BLAKEMAN